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SUBJECT Public Reaction in Bohemia to Communism
and to Groups in Exile

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1. Opposition to the Communistic regime in Bohemia is very marked for the following reasons:

a. Terror. The government remains in power through terror of which even the older Communists do not approve. The latter had hoped that the Communist Party would find a way for carrying out its program with the support and sympathy of the people. Punishment for contact with the West is not a deterrent to opposition. The more brutal the sentences, the greater is the courage of the people to replace those who have fallen. There is distrust between Communists and anti-Communists and fear of informers. Mass arrests occur daily. In the spring of this year, 49 persons were arrested in Jachymov for an unknown reason. All of them were sentenced to two and a half years' forced labor in the uranium mines there. They receive no pay and are given only a "railway warrant" once a month for visits by their relatives. Among the 49 arrested were a barber, a shopkeeper, a pensioner and an employee of the Jachymov agricultural department.

b. Low standard of living. The long-promised improvement in the standard of living has not been realized. Wages are not in proportion to the prices of necessities, and the people do not understand why so many items are still rationed when they know that in Western Germany everything is obtainable on the open market. In general, only very inferior goods can be purchased on the free market in Czechoslovakia. Only top party officials have attained a better standard of living, but they are in a class by themselves and differ from the former capitalists in being coarser and ridiculous. The people continually compare present conditions in an unfavorable way with those existing during the First Republic, 1918-1938. For example, a worker who previously earned 2-3 kcs per hour paid 1½ kcs for a good afternoon snack. Now he earns from 10-20 kcs, up to a maximum of 30 kcs, per hour but he must pay 30 kcs for a similar meal. Wages are decreasing. An employee earning 4,000 kcs in December 1949 received only 3,000 kcs in July 1950. A Prague taxicab driver who owned three cabs was compelled to join a public transportation company and he now receives only 2,800 kcs in monthly wages. In stores large purchases are investigated and checked with the income of the buyer. If any purchase exceeding 700 kcs is made on the free market, the police are allowed to investigate. In one of the "Pramen" stores in Prague, a customer making a 550 kcs purchase was approached by a civilian agent who informed him that if

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his purchase had been larger, the latter would have been compelled to reveal the source of his funds.

- c. Forced Labor. Work has become compulsory. Workers are driven to greater performance but with no increase in earnings. The people are disturbed by the regimentation of their leisure time. They yearn for privacy, for tranquility, and for an opportunity to live in accordance with individual desires. Work brigades are encountering increasing opposition.
- d. Propaganda. Propaganda is becoming intolerable and is aimed at the stupid. Talk of retrenchment and the duty to work is regarded as mere patter and is ineffective. It irritates by its systematic intensity and by proclaiming obvious lies to be irrefutable facts. Consequently, propaganda accomplishes the reverse of its intention. It has failed entirely to prove that the Americans have brought only misery to Europe. Though attempts are made to debase the memory of former President Benes, he still is revered by the people and is not reproached for the events of February 1948.

2. Opposition to Communism is apparent in the following ways:

- a. Only a small percentage of the people are members of the Communist Party. In Zabolice near Prague it has been estimated that not more than 10 percent of the people are confirmed Communists. The Communists believe that their days are numbered. Prime Minister Zapotocky has for sometime been suspected of making preparations in the event of an anti-Communist revolt. Silhavy, chairman of the District National Committee in Beroun, stated in April 1950: "We know the whole show will fall apart one day or Zapotocky would not be getting passports to leave the country. Go and read the inscription on the old city gate."* The passports referred to by Silhavy were obtained for Zapotocky's daughter and son-in-law, a German named Schleger, who live at Sporilov in Prague.
- b. About 80 percent of the people feel almost a fanatical resentment to any type of opposition to the West. It is assumed that the same proportion of troops would desert at the first opportunity and join the Western forces. Nevertheless there is not much hope for an immediate internal uprising. All weapons are in the hands of the Communists. The few remaining hidden weapons are deteriorating because of lack of maintenance. Moreover, an uprising would have to be organized on a wide basis if the centers of rebellion were not to be suppressed locally.
- c. Most non-Communists are hoping for a war. Korea is generally regarded as the beginning of such conflagration. American reverses are anxiously followed, but there is a prevailing optimism because of the technical superiority of the West. The faith of the Czechs arises from their unwavering conviction that in the conflict between right and wrong, right will inevitably triumph. This belief is so strong that the Czech people can continue to endure even greater moral blows without losing hope. Even the convinced Communists have indicated no enthusiasm over the Communist successes in Korea as they know well that this fight is not decisive.
- d. The people are always guessing at dates when the liberation will occur. Great hopes were placed on 15 May 1950 although it was not known why this date was selected. When nothing happened at that time and on subsequent dates, another day was mentioned immediately. The failure of previous predictions did not seem to affect people's optimism. Such is the power of wishful thinking which gives people the hope and courage to live.
- e. Political and party differences among the non-Communists have been entirely wiped out. At present there is no clear-cut party issue except that of Communism vs. anti-Communism. The opinion is widespread that the Czech National Socialist Party and the Catholic Party, the two non-Marxist parties before the February coup, should not have permitted the Communists to gain their power, even though nothing could have interfered with the coup.
- f. There is no enthusiasm for sports since they have become Communist-controlled. The Sokol movement and the Czech youth organization continue to exist because of government pressure.

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3. Little is known about the conditions facing the exiles abroad. The people have heard of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia but not how it is composed. They would like to learn how the council operates abroad, to what extent the Western Powers, especially the U.S., recognize it, and whether it is accepted as the official representative of the Czech exile groups.
4. Dr. Peter Zenkl has the confidence of the people but it is felt that he should speak more frequently on the radio and in a more encouraging manner. Frantisek Klatil is often mentioned in the Karlovo Vary and Jackymov districts, and his talks would be welcomed on the radio. Emil Ransdorf is missed at home and remembered with fondness by his students who continue to support him. The reaction to Bohumil Lausman is indicated by the following question: "What on earth are they doing there (abroad) with that 'crock' Lausman?"
5. The Czechs are opposed to General Frchala. News has seeped in from abroad and has been widely publicized that Frchala is uncompromisingly anti-Bones and that he is negotiating with the Sudeten Germans. Thus Frchala is regarded as an adventurer and his movement has no followers at home and no prospect of future support.
6. Prague gives the following appearance: It is a city without joy. There are swarms of SSB police in uniforms and the people are terrorized and afraid to speak or to smile. Formerly people used to be friendly and they would start conversations in trains and elsewhere. Today, unless they know one another, they suspect everyone. Few persons wear Communist Party badges. Plenty of goods are seen in shopwindows. There is no construction activity, and no houses are being repaired. Only the building of the Stefanik bridge is progressing fairly well; the road surface has been finished. The only large new buildings under construction is one apartment house in Zabehlice and six in Pankrac.

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[REDACTED] This inscription reads: "Everything is temporary, the Lord alone is eternal."

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